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THE INTERNATIONAL SEAMEN'S CONFERENCE

SINCE EARLY JUNE, under the auspices of the International Conference of Labor of the League of Nations, delegates representing the leading maritime nations of the world have been in session in Genoa, Italy. The United States has had informal rather than formal governmental representation; but Andrew Furuseth, president of the International Seamen's Union, who is the outstanding personality in the American shipping world as a labor leader, has been present in the city and has had much to do with shaping conclusions, through his personal contact with the delegates and by his public utterances.

Historically considered, the conference is a pendant of the conference held in Washington last year, at which it was arranged that this specialized issue should be discussed separately and later. Then as now the United States as a government had no formal connection with the gathering, owing to the anomalous position of the country toward the League.

From the international standpoint the Genoa Conference derives its importance from the large number of nations represented, the vital part that maritime affairs play in world history, and the composition of the conference. Ship-owners, seamen, and representatives of States—or the general public—have sat down to frame new standards of hours of labor, payment of workers, and terms of entering upon and leaving crews. As in Washington, so in Genoa, there has been much more unity of opinion and action than had been predicted. It is true that on the main issue, that of an eight-hour day and a forty-eight-hour week, the conservatives won, though a majority of the nations voting favored the standard. But the conference did recommend that in every nation seamen be placed on the same legal plane as ship-owners; and it endorsed the demand that all treaties compelling seamen to work against their will and making possible their imprisonment for failure to live up to contracts be abolished. To protect juvenile life the conference urged that no one be permitted to join a crew who is not fourteen years old. Sympathy with the demand that such rules as govern sea-going craft should also govern vessels plying on inland waters was formally voted. The conference also practically unanimously voted for abolition of the blockade against Russia.

To one who knows something of how much the much-abused seamen's act passed by Congress a few years ago has done not only to put an end to scandalous abuses on American ships but to force voluntary raising of wage standards on foreign-owned vessels coming into American ports, the significance of the Genoa Conference is more apparent than to a person not thus informed.

Seamen, like all other workers, are ambitious for the best possible conditions of labor. They will not remain in the British, Scandinavian, or Dutch service if they can get better treatment in America; and their assertion of this policy already has forced from non-American ship-owners substantial concessions.

Naturally resistance to a higher wage scale, shorter hours of labor, and greater freedom for seamen has come from Great Britain, and at this conference she frequently has found herself deserted by her Dominions. Canadians and Australians have a living standard that is more like the American than the British, and they know full well that they cannot build up their carrying trade on a wage basis such as Great Britain still stands for.

THE INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ONE of the most important agencies for collecting data on disputed issues of commerce, transportation, finance, and government recently brought into being in this country is the Chamber of Commerce of the United States. Through it a solidarity of knowledge and a directness of aim have been given to one of the most important groups of electors. Armed with the results of its questionnaires answered by more than three thousand local organizations, it can and it does appear before Congress or the Executive and speak with much weight.

Realizing the value to the trading interests of the world of a similar international organization, some of the projectors of the American body a few years ago set about creating an International Chamber of Commerce. The proposition met with the hearty assent of forward-looking and internationally minded men in Europe and Latin America. Then the war came and estopped all further negotiations and constructive action. As soon as the war ceased a large group of potential European members of such an international chamber visited the United States, partly to re-establish business connections and partly to study the workings of the Chamber of Commerce. These visitors at the Atlantic City Conference endorsed the plan to go ahead with organization of the chamber; and on June 26 it opened its first session in Paris, with delegates from five nations present to organize, but not to control, for, at one of the first sessions, admittance was given to representatives of all nations signatory to the Versailles Treaty.

On page 247 of this issue we summarize briefly the results of this meeting. Suffice it to add here that if this organization does nothing more than make it possible for men of many nations to discuss openly and endorse